

## 2.11 Israel

### The Library for the École Biblique et Archéologique Française de Jérusalem

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#### Preface: Generalities of Libraries in Israel

In the English language, the literature on Israeli libraries has been primarily through the contributions of Shmuel Sever, now Emeritus Library Director for the University of Haifa. Professor Sever has not only documented the history of Israeli libraries and the state of library education in Israel but has also been seminal in forming and developing these fields.<sup>1</sup> The authors owe him and his colleague, Inbal Shtuhl, also at the University of Haifa, a debt of gratitude for their scholarship and willingness to share with us their ongoing research.

Since Sever's synopsis of Israel in the third edition of *The World Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science* (published 1993), the libraries in Israel, as globally, have suffered from budget cuts. Moreover, one major library school in the country closed (namely The Hebrew University); though other colleges in Israel offer library courses these courses do not demand any liberal arts background. Finally, information is more and more sought through the Internet thus putting a high demand on libraries to offer more online resources.

#### Public Libraries

Between 1960 and 1975 the Director of the Department of Public Libraries at the Ministry of Education and Culture increased the national budget for public libraries. However, in 1975 a library law was passed which led to a division of resources among more libraries thus causing an overall scarcity.<sup>2</sup> Since 2000, funds for libraries were also allocated to political interest groups, especially to Jewish Orthodox communities and settlers in the West Bank, thus causing a diminishment in funds that would otherwise go to libraries.

The National Library of Israel<sup>3</sup> was the largest public library in Israel and has the finest collection of Judaica and Islamic studies in the world. In 2008,

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1 Cf. our bibliography for Shmuel Sever at end.

2 Personal email with Shmuel Sever, Jan. 22, 2012.

3 Cf. <http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/Pages/default.aspx>